

REMARKS

This is a response to the Office Action dated September 8, 2009. Claims 1, 4-28, 30 and 31 are pending.

The Examiner has repeated his rejection of claims 1, 4-15, 20 and 22-28 under 35 U.S.C. 251 as allegedly being an improper recapture of broadened claimed subject matter surrendered in the application for patent upon which the present reissue is based.

Applicant maintains that that this rejection is completely inconsistent with the Examiner's previous indication that his previous rejection of these claims was flawed and that claims 1 and 4-28 were in condition for allowance.

First, the Examiner again contends that the removal of the language "sealing means surrounding the discharge end of a water passage formed in said nozzle housing; said sealing means including a seal member" in reissue claim 1 constitutes impermissible recapture since this language was added to the claims in an Amendment filed August 8, 1996. The Examiner argues that this changes occurred to more specifically define the seal of the instant invention from the prior art.

Applicant's note once again, however, that the recapture rule does not apply in the absence of evidence that the applicant's amendment was "an admission that the scope of that claim was not in fact patentable," *Seattle Box Co. v. Industrial Crating & Packing, Inc.*, 731 F.2d 818, 826, 221 USPQ 568, 574 (Fed. Cir. 1984). Deliberately canceling or amending a claim in an effort to overcome a reference strongly suggests that the applicant admits that the scope of the claim before the cancellation or amendment is unpatentable, but it is not dispositive because other evidence in the prosecution history may indicate the contrary, *In re Clement*, 131 F.3d 1464, 45 U.S.P.Q. 2d 1161.

In the present the reissue claims are not attempting to impermissibly broaden the limitations in question because (a) the amendments do not broaden the subject limitations, (b) the amendments are not directly pertinent to subject matter surrendered and/or (c) in any event, the portion of the added limitations amended was not added to overcome a prior art rejection.

The patent claim 1, prior to the present reissue application, recited a "sealing means" in a specific location (surrounding the discharge end of the water passage) and required that the sealing means include a "seal member" in that location. Reissue claim 1 of the present application still

recites precisely the same structure in precisely the same location (i.e., a “seal surrounding the discharge end of the water passage”) as in the patent claim. The only changes are elimination of the word “member” in the recitation “seal member” and the phrase “sealing means surrounding the discharge end of the water passage formed in said nozzle housing, said sealing means including”.

As has been explained in detail, as originally filed, claim 1 called for providing “a sealed connection”, and thus, implicitly recited a seal. In conjunction with the other features added by the August 8, 1996 amendment, the seal was recited explicitly, but making explicit what was previously implicit does not narrow a claim. Claim 1 was narrowed by the recitation that the seal “. . . [surrounded] . . . the discharge end of the water passage . . .”, as this specified the location of the seal in comparison to the location of the seal in Balister, however, this limitation is still in reissue claim 1. Thus, claim 1 as presently pending is not broader in scope with respect to this feature, and thus, there is no issue of recapture.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn as to this aspect of claims 1 and 12.

The Examiner also argues that the removal of the language “means for retaining said nozzle selection sleeve in place” in presently pending reissue claim 1 also represents an impermissible recapture. This is also incorrect.

The Examiner has asserted that the limitation in question was added to claim 1 by the amendment of January 15, 1997 in response to a rejection. The subject limitation, however, could not have been added to claim 1 to distinguish it from the prior art.

In the Office Action dated October 29, 1996, claims 1 and 9 (*inter alia*) were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 as anticipated by the Saint-Raymond French patent 2,313,132. Claim 9 as originally presented, was dependent on claim 6, but that claim was canceled by the amendment dated August 8, 1996. Thus, claim 9 had no parent claim as of October 29, 1996.

This informality was noted and objected to by the Examiner in Section 1 of the October 29, 1997 Office Action, and applicant responded in the January 15, 1997 amendment by canceling claim 9, and incorporating the recitation of claim 9 (i.e., “means for retaining said rotatable sleeve in place”) into claim 1. In the Remarks, Applicant argued that claim 1 was patentable over Saint-Raymond for several reasons, and these reasons were evidently persuasive, because the rejection was

withdrawn, and the application was allowed. None of these reasons, however, were related in any way to the “means for retaining.” Whatever persuaded the Examiner to allow claim 1, it was most definitely not the inclusion of this limitation. This limitation was not mentioned in Applicant’s arguments and this limitation does not distinguish the claim over the Saint-Raymond patent. The sleeve 32 in the reference has means for retaining it in place.

Finally, from the fact that both claims 1 and 9 were rejected as anticipated by Saint-Raymond, it is clear that the examiner himself did not consider that incorporating the limitation of claim 9 into claim 1 would make claim 1 allowable. In fact, as stated in Section 1 of the October 29, 1997 Office Action, the examiner “assumed for the purposes of [subsequently stated] rejections, that claim 9 was intended to be *dependent* on claim 1. Thus, the addition of the “means for retaining” to claim 1 did not render that claim patentable.

In any case, it is clear in retrospect, that adding the limitation was an error, and that applicant is entitled to correct this error by reissue. There is no reason for the Examiner to question applicant’s assertion that the error was without deceptive intention. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn as to this aspect of claim 1.

Finally, the Examiner continues to argue that the inclusion of claims 22-28 in the present reissue application which are allegedly broader in scope than patented claims 16-19 is also an example of impermissible recapture. This is also incorrect.

Applicant is puzzled by this ground for rejection since it seems that present claim 22, which specifies that the nozzle can be changed while the sprinkler is operational has been characterized as an attempted recapture simply *because* they are broader than claims 16-19 of the patent.

Claim 22 is broader than patent claim 16 (added to the original application as claim 23) in that the selectable nozzle arrangement of claim 22 is not required to be:

mounted over the outer surface of . . . [the sprinkler] . . . housing to rotate therewith and . . . [be] . . . manually rotatable relative to said housing . . .

It is respectfully submitted, however, that claims 22-28 represent a legitimate attempt to secure broadened coverage of a combination for which protection was inadvertently (and without deceptive intention) not sought in the original application. As was previously explained, no claims

of the scope of these claims were canceled from the original application, and no broader claims directed to this subject matter were ever narrowed in response to a rejection in the original application or during the re-examination. Thus, there can be no issue of recapture with respect to these claims

The fact that more limited claims were *added* to the application does not preclude applicant from now seeking claims of broader scope. Since the combination of a rotatable sprinkler mounted on a riser, and having a nozzle plate is not shown in the prior art, failure to include claims of that scope in the original application, or to add them later, is clearly the kind of error which can legitimately be corrected by reissue and should not be regarded as an attempt to recapture subject matter abandoned to overcome prior art..

Since the Examiner has no basis for questioning applicant's declaration that these claims were omitted without deceptive intention, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn as to claims 22-28.

Further, with respect to claim 16, the Examiner argues that since claim 16 was amended on January 29, 1997 any amendment of claim 16 constitutes recapture. This is clearly incorrect.

As is noted above, the recapture rule does not apply in the absence of evidence that the applicant's amendment was "an admission that the scope of that claim was not in fact patentable," The Examiner has failed to identify any such evidence. Indeed, the Examiner fails to indicate any particular material that is allegedly being recaptured in claim 16.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1, 4-15, 20 and 22-28 under 35 U.S.C. 251 should be reconsidered and withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10 and 11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,784,325 to Walker in view of Meshberg (3,083,872). Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

The Examiner argues that Walker discloses that each of the openings 118 of Walker have different configurations from each other. This is incorrect. Applicant has carefully reviewed the Walker reference and can find no disclosure that each of the openings 118 have "mutually different configurations from each other," as is required by claim 1 of the present application. The openings 118 are discussed at Column 9, lines 61-67 of Walker. However, this portion of Walker includes no

discussion of the relative configurations of the openings 118. Further, Figs 2, 3 and 11, allegedly showing the openings 118 also fail to illustrate different configurations of the openings.

Further, the Examiner concedes that Walker does not disclose the “seal member” of claim 1, for example, of the present application. The Examiner argues, however, that Meshberg discloses this feature. This is incorrect as Meshberg relates to a dispensing package for materials under pressure of a gas. Thus, Meshberg does not disclose a seal member surrounding the discharge end of the water passage,” or that provides, “ a sealed connection to the pressurized water passage of the nozzle housing,” as is required by claim 1 of the present application.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

The Examiner further rejects claims 22, 25 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Walker. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

As is noted above, Walker fails to disclose that the openings 118 are configured differently. Accordingly, Walker fails to disclose a sprinkler wherein “the plurality of nozzle orifices are each configured mutually differently,” as is required by claim 22.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 22, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Walker in view of Meshberg and further in view of Smith. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

Claim 9 depends on claim 1. As is noted above, claim 1 is believed to be patentable over Walker and Meshberg for the reasons described above. Further, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over Walker, Meshberg and Smith, since Walker, Meshberg and Smith, either alone or in combination, fail to show or suggest the patentable features of claim 1 described above.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom, including claim 9, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claims 12-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Grassberger in view of Meshberg. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

Grassberg fails to disclose a nozzle plate that is “accessible from the top of said rotatable nozzle housing so as to be removable while said sprinkler is operational.” First, as can be seen in Fig. 1 the plate 11 is clearly not accessible from the top of the nozzle housing. Further, even if it were, which it is not, it could not be removed during operation. Meshberg also fails to disclose such a nozzle plate.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 12, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claims 12 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Walker in view of Meshberg. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

Walker also fails to disclose a nozzle plate that is “accessible from the top of said rotatable nozzle housing so as to be removable while said sprinkler is operational.” The Examiner argues that the sleeve 116 corresponds to the plate of claim 12, and alleges that the plate can be removed during operation. This is incorrect. There is no disclosure anywhere in Walker that the sleeve 116 is removable at all, much less that it is removable during operation as required by claim 116.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 12, and the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claims 20, 21, 23, 24, 27 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Walker. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this rejection.

Claim 20 depends from claim 1. As is noted above, claim 1, and the claims depending therefrom are believed to be patentable over Walker for at least the reasons described above.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 20 is patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claim 22 is also believed to be patentable over Walker for at least the reasons described above.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 22, and the claims depending therefrom, including claim 23, 24, 27 and 28, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

Claim 21 depends on claim 16. No grounds for rejection have been identified based on any of the prior art references with respect to claim 16. Therefore, since claim 16 is believed to be patentable over the cited art, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 21 is also patentable over the cited art.

Claims 30 and 31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Kah Jr. U.S. Patent 4,272,024 (Kah). Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

As previously explained, Kah is directed to a construction having a fixed nozzle plate which is riveted in place within the nozzle head. In contrast, the present invention discloses a construction in which the nozzle plate is adjustable. Indeed, claim 31 was added to the present application to emphasize these distinguishing features. As is specifically recited in claim 31, the nozzle plate is "movable relative to the nozzle housing to position the orifice in or out of alignment with the flow passage." As was explained in Applicant's previous Responses, there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion of this in Kah. Indeed, the Examiner has once again failed to address this distinction at all in the Office Action and makes no mention of where this feature is described in Kah, Jr.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 31, and the claims depending therefrom, including claim 30, are patentable over the cited art for at least the reasons described above.

In view of the foregoing, favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,



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